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SUBJECT: CENTRAL SULAWESI: POST-CONFLICT TENTENA AND POSO -- SAVING  
A "LOST GENERATION"

REF: JAKARTA 2597, 2598, 3143

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This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On December 3, Syaiful Anam and Amril Ngiode were sentenced to 18 years and 15 years respectively for bombing a market in Tentena on May 29, 2005. The bombing, which killed 22 and wounded 40, was only one horrifying episode during an extended period of violent inter-religious conflict in Central Sulawesi. Consulate General Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer and Pol/Econ Assistant visited religious leaders in Poso and Tentena in November to assess progress in ongoing efforts to recover from more than eight years of violence. Muslim and Christian leaders in both towns indicated that the hard work of recovery is more critical than ever before. Officials at the new Christian University in Tentena requested USG assistance to develop higher educational standards. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a November visit to Poso and Tentena, Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer and Pol/Econ Assistant spoke extensively with religious leaders, academics, NGOs, and government officials about continuing efforts to help local communities recover from years of inter-religious violence. As witnessed during our September trip to Central Sulawesi (Jakarta 2597 and 2598), residents are focused on rebuilding, reconciliation, and development in an effort to eliminate the distrust and poverty which allowed extremists to turn religious differences into violence.

¶3. (SBU) The original Regency of Poso, once populated by roughly equal numbers of Muslims and Christians, has now become three separate regencies: Poso, Morowali and Tojo Una-Una. Poso itself is now 22% Muslim, 71% Protestant and the remaining roughly 7% Catholic, Hindu and Buddhist, according to figures supplied by the Christian University in Tentena. Since 1998, roughly 30% of the Poso Regency's population -- some 90,000 people -- have become refugees. Christians resettled largely in Tentena, while Muslims in Palu and Parigi. Christian leaders from the Christian Church of Central Sulawesi (GKST) in Tentena told us that Muslims merchants had recently returned to the same Tentena market that had been bombed in 2005. They felt this was a clear indication of a changed atmosphere in Tentena, and evidence that things were finally on the right track. Police and religious leaders are focused on rooting out the sort of extremists that have fed the conflict (Jakarta 3143).

14. (SBU) Muslim leaders Yahya Mangun and Daeng Raja of the Poso Ulama Council told us that while the situation in Poso was currently good, they remained on guard against the arrival of hardliners, like those from Java who previously incited inter-religious conflict. The scorched walls of homes attacked during the conflict were still visible, but many newer homes were visible too in areas hard hit by violence. Mangun stressed that while "billions of rupiah" had reached the region, a foundation for long term development had yet to solidify. Poso community leaders are focused on developing the agriculture and tourism sectors, particularly ways to improve corn harvest efficiency, (which is locally more profitable than cocoa according to Daeng Raja). While the local government dreams of large-scale investment down the road, interim success has been achieved through the work of one local NGO, the Sayogya Institute, which has successfully established a microfinance program in Poso. During our visit to local villages, we met with several beneficiaries who had started new businesses in the previous year. One Muslim woman told us that the expert advisor assigned to help her was Christian, and she had never had an opportunity to interact so closely with someone of another faith before. Thus the program did not merely help her family survive economically, it gave her family a chance reassess its preconceptions about people of other faiths and reduced the potential for future violence.

#### New Religious Geography -----

15. (SBU) In late April 2007, President Yudhoyono visited a number of religious institutions in Poso and Tentena and laid the foundation for several new ones. He placed a cornerstone for a new Islamic boarding school (pesantren), inspected reconstruction efforts at a damaged mosque in Poso regency, and laid the cornerstone of the Christian University of Tentena

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(UNKRIT). The president pledged support for these diverse institutions and stressed their symbolic importance in the recovery of the province. Officials at UNKRIT told us that their institution is not meant to serve only a Protestant Christian population. They hope that more general academic courses like English, computer science, economics and sociology will attract students from various religious backgrounds and speed reconciliation between Christian and Muslim populations.

#### A Request for US Help -----

16. (SBU) UNKRIT officials described to us their plans to bolster development of the Christian community and presented us with a prospectus outlining their needs. Fearing a "lost generation" of children and young adults in their refugee communities, UNKRIT officials are working to expand their fledgling university to serve the regency's new Christian majority. The conflict has a continuing visible presence on campus; many Christian refugees live in makeshift plywood and corrugated steel housing on land now owned by the University. Refugees are supposed to vacate these homes this year and move elsewhere. UNKRIT officials are not certain what will happen because there is no resettlement plan at present. University officials requested US government assistance in training faculty, providing scholarships for promising students, and installing teleconference facilities so that they can begin a distance education program with universities elsewhere in Indonesia and around the world.  
MCCLELLAND